

# **High Point called biotech player**

*Has rich mixture of researchers, labs, workers, community leaders*

By Denise Becker

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If its disparate communities continue to work together, the Triad has what it takes to attract more biotechnology companies, a biotechnology executive told High Point Economic Development officials Wednesday.

Steven Burke, a senior vice president with the N.C. Biotechnology Center, said he was pleased that the Triad was welcoming the biotechnology industry into its communities. With the opening of the center's satellite office in Winston-Salem on June 16, the Triad is poised to see real growth in the sector, he said.

"The benefits from this technology are coming steadily," he told the High Point Economic Development Corp. board. "This is a growing sector. This is a source of jobs."

Because of this, many communities across the United States as well as overseas are courting biotechnology companies. But it takes more than just money to become a site for such an industry, Burke said.

"It doesn't do any good to just expand some university research programs or set up a biotech park," he said.

Instead, an area must have a rich mixture of researchers, universities, laboratories, investors, regulators, trained workers, entrepreneurs and community leaders willing to look to the future.

All of which North Carolina, and the Triad, has.

"North Carolina is judged among the leading four or five places for biotech," he said.

"(Biotechnology) is very appropriate to the Triad."

The effort to develop the sector here, though, must be long-term and realistic, he said. Most importantly, it must be thought of as "Triadwide biotechnology center" and not just the province of individual communities.

"(The Triad's) spirit is wonderfully present," he added. "You have imagination. There's a future here for biotechnology, and it's nice to be a part of it."

Charles Cain, senior vice president of legal and public affairs for Banner Pharmacaps, agreed that the Triad had the makings for a world-class biotechnology hub. Banner Pharmacaps is a pharmaceutical company based in High Point that manufactures soft-gel capsules for drug companies.

A vibrant biotechnology sector in the Triad may provide his company with additional opportunities for partnerships and growth, Cain said. For example, many of the current drugs developed by biotech companies are not given to patients in pill form. But as the biotech industry matures, companies such as Banner Pharmacaps may be able to work with them to develop other forms of “drug delivery,” he said.

Although Banner Pharmacaps works with companies across the world, “it's simply easier to work with a local company,” Cain said.

As the Triad becomes more well-known as a center for biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies, it will be easier to attract world-class scientists to work here, Cain said.

“Right now, we have to bring them here and show what we have to offer,” he said. “We have to sell the Triad to them.”

High Point Mayor Arnold Koonce said regionwide partnerships are the wave of the future, especially as the area's traditional manufacturing sector shrinks. He is confident that the Triad has a bright future in biotechnology.